



# Squanto's Journey: The Story of the First Thanksgiving

*Joseph Bruchac , Greg Shed (Illustrator)*

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In 1620 an English ship called the *Mayflower* landed on the shores inhabited by the Pokanoket people, and it was Squanto who welcomed the newcomers and taught them how to survive in the rugged land they called Plymouth. He showed them how to plant corn, beans, and squash, and how to hunt and fish. And when a good harvest was gathered in the fall, the two peoples feasted together in the spirit of peace and brotherhood. Almost four hundred years later, the tradition continues. . . .

## Squanto's Journey: The Story of the First Thanksgiving Details

Date : Published September 15th 2000 by Harcourt Children's Books

ISBN : 9780152018177

Author : Joseph Bruchac , Greg Shed (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Historical, Historical Fiction, North American Hi..., American History

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## From Reader Review Squanto's Journey: The Story of the First Thanksgiving for online ebook

### Meg says

I was excited to check out this book but it fell short of my expectations. It includes a lot of facts, and I appreciated that it set the historical record straight, but kids are not super interested in 1614 and 1621 and lots of specific names of English traders and Native tribes. The writing is very dry and doesn't bring the story of Squanto ALIVE - which is strange, since the story of Squanto is quite dramatic and intense. For example, Squanto and his friends are invited onto the English ship for a feast, but this turns out to be a trick and the ship sails away with them on board. In this book, this very vivid episode was buried at the bottom of a page and told in about two matter-of-fact sentences, where it could have taken up at least 2-3 pages on its own if told in an exciting manner.

I guess this criticism is not totally fair since my child is only 3, much younger than the target age for this book, but she often enjoys books aimed for older children. In general, I'd say if you have older kids (I would say 8 and up) and want a factual account of Squanto's life to add balance to the history books, this would be a good one. But as a story, there's definitely something lacking.

The illustrations are gorgeous!

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### Luisa Knight says

Don't pass this up - Squanto's story is an important part to the history of Thanksgiving. And this is a great rendering for children. There are pictures on each page spread and although it's history, it's told more in story format so kids will stay intrigued.

Ages: 4 - 9

Cleanliness: God is referred to by a few Native American names, such as the Great Mystery.

#thanksgiving

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### Emilee M. says

This book had a good lesson and the illustrations were great. I thought it was a bit boring for kids though.

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### Nancy says

Published: 2000, Silver Whistle

Age: 7-10

This is the story of the first Thanksgiving from the Native Indians perspective. What younger students may not know is that an English captain, Thomas Hunt abducted Squanto and some of his tribesmen and took

them to Spain to be slaves. Spanish friars helped Squanto escape to England where he learned some English. He longed for his native land and eventually his friend, Thomas Dermer, took him back to his homeland, America. He found that most of his people, the People of the Falls, or the Patuxet, had died from diseases brought by the English traders. Squanto continued to work for peace and it was he who helped the Pilgrims survive. An endnote by Bruchac explains his research into the true facts of the first Thanksgiving and the myths (such as hats with buckles on them.) The pictures fill one side of the page and the text is on the facing page. The detailed gouache illustrations are in beautiful earth tones and show authentic clothing and landscape. This book is filled with information. It shows a full double page picture of a Thanksgiving dinner- I didn't see a turkey, but it was not mentioned in the text what exactly they ate other than corn, beans, and squash. There is also a glossary of words from the story with definitions and explanations.

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## **Beverly says**

This was a pleasant story of much of Squanto's life, told from his point of view. He tells of his captivity, being taken to England, learning to speak English, and becoming a translator and peace maker between Native people (different tribes) and the English. The gouache paintings on a textured background are lovely and realistic.

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## **Heather says**

Oh wow, it's in his perspective. How interesting!

'My family were leaders of the Patuxet people and I, too, was raised to lead.'

'It goes toward the falls that gave our people their name. We were the Patuxet, the People of the Falls.'

'Pilgrims landed in the Freezing Moon of 1620.'

Squanto is a little feminine looking in the face, and the nose doesn't look Native American at all.

Oh, John Smith! (colin farrel from the New World). 'I liked the way Dermer shook my hand.'

'Smith had learned much from dealing with other Indians in the summer land of Virginia. He knew we valued honor.'

The other captain was Thomas Hunt. He's the one that asked the Indians to come for a feast aboard his ship.

We know he's the one that led them on!! I can't believe we know the name!

I wonder if Squanto was married or had a family.

I like little details of how they would have talked then, like calling the ocean 'salt waters.'

Oh right, like Squanto a Warrior's Tale with Adam Beach. They took them to Spain (I thought it was England), and there they met Brothers, or monks, who helped him sail to England. He was a pniese, a man of courage. He told his people stories and told them to stay strong.

He sailed back with Thomas Dermer, one of John Smith's officers. He said that 'things were not well between my People of the First Light and the English.' Never heard them referred to as People of the First Light.

He also said that a lot of his people were killed because of disease.

'The sickness had come down upon Patuxet like the blow of a war club.'

'my wife, my children, my parents, and all those closest to me were gone.' that answers that. I didn't know he had his own family!

'I will not say their names now. I will speak them again when my own feet climb the highest mountain and I walk the Road of Stars to greet them.'

As him and Dermer kind of negotiated between different tribes and the white people, an English captain

invited more Indian's on board and they were killed. Epanow and his warriors attacked them, and Dermer was wounded. He escaped, but Squanto was taken captive by the Pokanoket.

I'm hearing tribes I haven't heard before. The Narragansett asked the Pokanoket and Nemasket to pay them tribute. Their tribe hadn't been touched by the disease from the white people.

'I spoke to Massasoit, the sachem of the Pokanoket, as a priest should, with respect and honor.'

The page with Squanto talking to Massasoit, with the ship in the background, and the pink clouds is pretty. Samoset came to visit, a sachem from the Pemaquid people, who lived farther up the coast.

"Let me talk with the Songlisoniak." Who is that?

It was cool how he showed them arrows in his hand, one with flint, the other removed. It was a symbol for war or peace.

"The food was so good," Samoset said to me later, laughing as he spoke, "I decided to spend the night." I wonder if he really thought that!

Samoset looks more Indian, the nose and everything. What happened with Squanto?

It's supposed to be Samoset and Squanto walking into the village, but neither look like themselves. 'Though much was changed, I knew that I at last had returned to the land of my home.' It's odd he goes back to find his people dead, then later goes back to find these new people taken over, and renamed it. & yet feels like he's returned home. Then says "'Perhaps these men can share our land as friends," I told my brother, at my side.' Odd to call him brother, cuz they're not related. & odd to want to share the land with them.

'The Pokanoket freed me to be a guide and interpreter for the English.' I forgot he was still captive all this time!

'It had always been the job of the Patuxet women to care for the crops while men such as myself hunted.' Love hearing of their culture!

'I told them when it was the Moon of Hoeing.'

'The three sisters--the corn and beans and squash.' Never heard that terminology before.

He mentioned looking at the beans growing up the corn stalks. I read in another book that he told them to plant the beans beside the corn so it would grow up the stalks.

'this feast for all our people.' I like that line.

I like the page where he said 'I am Squanto. I am known to all those who gather here: English, Pokanoket, Nemasket, even a few of my own surviving Patuxets. I speak to you as a priest, a man of honor. I will never leave this land. I give thanks for all of our people to the Creator of All Things.'

He mentioned surviving Patuxet. Who was it?

I like the picture of him standing in the sun, with his arms raised.

Authors note: 'as a person of native American New England descent.' Wow!

'Our native people have always believed that the land talks to us when we listen. I have stood on the same ground where Squanto walked three centuries ago, feeling the sea breeze in my face and smelling the smoke from cooking fires, where the same foods he would have eaten were being cooked in the traditional way. As I stood there, I, too, heard the whisper of the earth, a song on the wind reminding me that those ancient voices will never be gone.'

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## Tibby (she/her) says

Finally a Thanksgiving story I feel comfortable reading to my daughter! As Bruchac points out in the author's note the Native American side of this story is rarely told and a good deal of the first Thanksgiving story told from a European perspective is inaccurate or wrong (from foods eaten to clothing worn).

The text is longer in this so it's probably better suited to older readers, but personally I would read it aloud to my daughter. There are some hard pieces to this story, like the fact that Squanto is kidnapped and sold into

slavery or that the majority of his people are wiped out by illness, but Bruchac handles these parts of the story beautifully. He mentions them matter of factly and never dwells on it. He also doesn't stoop to painting all Europeans with the villain's brush nor does he fall back on Native American stereotypes of the noble savage or the naive, gentle Indian (I would have been appalled if he had!).

The story itself is quite interesting. Despite the unfortunate circumstances Squanto lived a well-traveled and interesting life. He also must have been incredibly intelligent as he spoke several languages. He was also able to move between cultures with some ease, although I'm sure there was great prejudice.

I have yet to find a good Thanksgiving book that gives the European side of the story, which is not covered here. I'm sure there is one out there, but I will have to do more research. Instead pair this with *The Perfect Thanksgiving* which celebrates families that aren't perfect and *Molly's Pilgrim*, a great take on what it means to be a pilgrim and immigrant.

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### **Carlee says**

In this book, Squanto helped the first New England colony survive. This book portrays native Americans positively and is detail rich. For example, accuracy exists in showing the food the Pilgrims ate to the clothes they wore. It is definitely a springboard for further reading. Pretty pictures, but not terribly interesting for students.

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### **Mistiema1 Downs says**

*Squanto's Journey: The Story of the First Thanksgiving* is more a biography of Tisquantum (Squanto) than it is a story of the first Thanksgiving, but it is nonetheless moving and important in its endeavour to gently correct many of the extremely common misconceptions surrounding this holiday.

The story itself was captivating but a bit lengthy for the younger members in our family (the age recommendation on the back of the book is 6-9). My almost 8-year-olds were rapt. They did find the various dates cited throughout the story a bit confusing, but a timeline of our own creation helped to put things in perspective for them.

The illustrations are earthy and luminous and captivated the attention of all the children. There were actual "oohs" and "ahs" over some of the pages, particularly near the end.

Overall, if you are interested in presenting the Native American perspective on Thanksgiving to your children, this book should be on your list. A rarity, even with its imperfections.

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### **Jenny says**

I really loved the beautiful illustrations. This was a fascinating look at Squanto's life...he definitely had some difficult and unfair things occur to him but he was brave, intelligent, and resourceful. This allowed him to help the Wampanoag people and the English settlers. I appreciated the author's note and felt this was a nice

introduction to Squanto and his contributions.

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### Abigail says

As Bruchac - a prolific children's author of Abenaki ancestry - notes in his afterword to this excellent picture-book, the Thanksgiving story is seldom told from the Native American perspective, and is usually marred by gross historical and cultural inaccuracies. That these untruths are spoon-fed to our children as part of our national mythology, makes them all-the-more harmful.

Squanto's Journey is an excellent corrective for some of the misinformation currently available, telling of the life story of Tisquantum (Squanto), a member of the Patuxet nation, whose role in befriending the English settlers of Plymouth would prove so fateful. Young readers will perhaps be surprised to learn that Squanto was kidnapped by an English captain, sold as a slave to the Spanish, and that, when he was finally able to return to his homeland, discovered most of his people had been killed by diseases brought to the Americas by European settlers.

Despite this horrifying history, Squanto believed in the possibilities of peace and friendship, and when the settlers at Plymouth needed his help, he gave it freely. This moving story of a true *pniese*, or man of honor, who never allowed suffering to embitter him, is matter-of-fact and realistic, without being brutal. Accompanied by Greg Shed's gorgeous gouache illustrations, Squanto's Journey should be required reading for anyone who thinks that being thankful requires forgetting the truth...

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### SamZ says

I love the beautiful illustrations in this tale and the different approach to the historical tale of the Plymouth Thanksgiving feast. I also really enjoyed the author's note about Native American history and the glossary in the back. The only thing that I found myself wanting in this story was a little bit more emotion in the tone. Sometimes it felt like 'Squanto' (the author) was just presenting facts rather than feelings, especially when it came to his capture and his learning of the death of his family and tribe. Although I do feel that the illustrations beautifully portrayed the emotions of the tale.

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### Manybooks says

This picture book biography of Tisquantum (Squanto) by renowned Native American children's author Joseph Bruchac presents the fascinating, often tragic and heartbreaking story of Squanto's abduction and subsequent enslavement in Spain, his long journey back from Europe to North America, only to find that his people, the Patuxet, had been decimated by sickness, to finally, presenting his essential and historic role in helping the Plymouth Colony settlers survive in the so-called New World (what to plant, how to plant, Squanto's role as peacemaker and interpreter). But while I most certainly have much enjoyed reading Squanto's Journey, I do have to wonder how well it actually works as a picture book (and for the so called picture book crowd, how well it is suited for younger children). For the author's, for Joseph Bruchac's presented narrative is quite dense and involved, and while the glossary at the back is indeed most appreciated, in my opinion, it would have been much better and more useful to have the terms from the glossary also explained within the text proper, perhaps with footnotes (otherwise, one might well have to keep flipping back and forth, which can be distracting, and the text of Squanto's Journey already somewhat

has that tendency anyway).

And although the first person narrative of Squantos Journey is indeed informative and generally reads flowingly, engagingly, poetically enough, there is also and unfortunately somewhat of a lack of personal emotional immediacy and passion present (almost a feeling as though Squanto is not simply relating his story, but is actually presenting more a philosophical lecture, a declamatory sermon or homily of sorts). And this lack of emotionality, combined with a kind of iconic grandioseness is then also equally rather demonstrated and shown by Greg Shed's accompanying illustrations. For while they are lushly descriptive and amply authentic seeming (and indeed very much adeptly rendered), they also do somewhat have the tendency to be a bit overly romanticising (for when I reread Squanto's Journey just now, I did and do notice that many of the depictions of Native Americans, but of Squanto in particular, are somehow glowing and inherently shining, that there is almost an aura of strangely religious spirituality depicted). Now I do very much appreciate the fact that with Squanto's Journey both author and illustrator, that both Joseph Bruchac and Greg Shed, have obviously done a substantial amount of research, and I for one (even with the potential issues mentioned above) have indeed and massively enjoyed both narrative and author's note, as well as Shed's accompanying pictorial renderings (and actually, if truth be told, I have in fact enjoyed and continue to appreciate Bruchac's author's note considerably more than the text itself, more than the narrative of Squanto's Journey). However and that all having been said, Bruchac really and truly also should have included a list of works cited, of works he consulted for research purposes (a bibliography). And perhaps even more importantly, the author's note should also and absolutely have mentioned that Tisquantum is and continues to be very much a controversial figure for many Native Americans (he is actually considered somewhat of a traitor by some, if not even many Native Americans and while I do NOT think this information should have necessarily been included within the text of Squanto's Journey, it is nevertheless an important and essential piece of information that really should have been part and parcel to Bruchac's otherwise excellent and informative author's note).

Recommended for older children above the ages of nine or even ten, as the narrative is substantial, dense, with much potentially novel vocabulary, not to mention that Squanto's Journey will also likely, and actually should (must) engender questions, discussions, debates and additional research (and Squanto's Journey would also be a good and essential teaching resource for a unit on Thanksgiving or Native American history, yet another reason why I strongly do think a bibliography should have been included, as it would have very much increased the book's teaching, learning and supplemental research value).

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### **Anna says**

Wasn't extremely interesting for students, but has information that can be pulled out for comprehension. Images are water colors, but dull for 1st grade. I think this would be good for 3rd grade.

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### **Andrea says**

This was the first book I'd read that had Squanto telling the story. It was neat to learn his people, the Patuxet Indians, were named after the waterfall. They were the People of the Falls. They valued honor and John Smith's officer, Thomas Dermer, apparently shook Squanto's hand, which meant a lot to him.

The illustrations were a little fuzzy. I would have liked for them to be clearer and have more detail, but they weren't bad.

He and other men were tricked to come on board by another captain, were told they would dine on the ship but were really sailed to Spain. I liked the inclusion of pniese, a man of courage. He supposedly told stories to his people and wanted them to be strong on the journey. The Brothers got him to England, and he knew if he could be useful to the English they might let him sail back home.

Interesting custom that they didn't speak the names of the dead. He wouldn't speak of them until he went on the Road of Stars himself.

Squanto and Thomas Dermer made friendly contacts with some tribes. But the leader of the Capawack tribe, Epanow, had been taken as a slave and hated the English. An English captain invited a group of Indians on board his ship, where he shot them. In retaliation, Epanow attacked Squanto and Thomas was injured. He got Thomas to safety but Squanto was taken as a prisoner of Pokanoket. This tribe was weakened from sickness and the Narragansett ordered the once-proud Pokanoket and Nemasket tribes to pay tribute to them. Great insight into the way the tribes worked and their values.

Samoset brought two arrows with him when he went to see the English. One had an arrowhead and the other didn't, to represent the Indians offering either war or peace. That was a really cool custom one I'd never heard of.

Squanto was freed from being prisoner to be a guide and interpreter. The last sentences in the book was Squanto giving thanks to the Creator. He was at home in Plymouth because it was the land of his people. The image showed him at sunset with his arms raised to the sky, the sun shining over the water. The very last page was an image of Squanto with his arms crossed, standing in the woods and the light was filtering through the trees. It was a nice picture.

The author's note was a nice touch, though it was definitely for adults and not children. There were really big words like reverberation. It's cool that she's a descendent of the Native American New Englanders, and that when she writes about other nations, she wants to hear the voices of the native people. She had help from actual Wampanoag Indians, including Fast Turtle and Slow Turtle. It was cool learning thank you in their language, wliwini nidobak. Very interesting how her sister is an authority on the Indians of the early 17th century and has been consulted by historical villages, museums, and Indian nations like the Plimoth Plantation. The author says that almost all books on the first Thanksgiving have errors about the event from the food they ate to the clothes the Pilgrims wore. She, like other Indians, believe the land talks to them when they listen. It's so cool she's been on that land that Squanto lived on, while food was being cooked in a traditional way.

I liked that it was in Squanto's point of view. That's original and refreshing from the other Thanksgiving books that have Squanto as a small part and focus on the Pilgrims instead. There's insight into the Native American way of thinking. I wish the artwork had been better and the writing a little better, because it wasn't that good.